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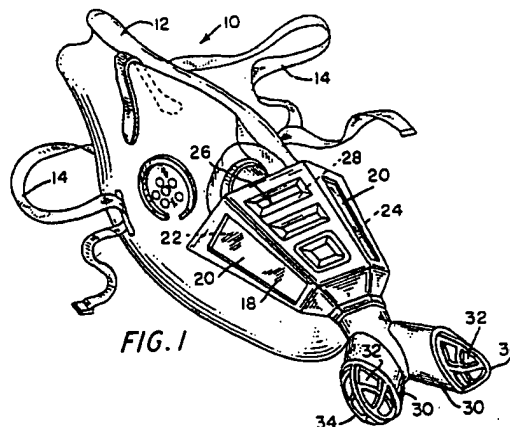
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A respiration-signalling device.

In a first embodiment, the device (10) is in the form of a face mask (12) for affixing to the face of a patient (16) to monitor the patient's respiration. It is self-powered and self-contained so that such respiration can be monitored all the while the patient (16) is being transported. It incorporates light-emitting diodes (22, 24) which are illuminated, sequentially, to evidence regular breathing. When the patient (16) stops breathing, the diodes (22, 24) do not illuminate, and an audible alarm is sounded to make medical personnel immediately aware of the breathing cessation.



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This invention pertains to respiration monitoring and/or detecting devices, and in particular to a novel respiration-signalling device.

In the prior art there obtain respiration monitoring devices which are used with a bed-ridden patient to insure that the patient is manifesting normal breathing. However, what has been a long-sought need is a monitoring device which can signal respiration of a patient during transportation from an operating room to a recovery room; i.e., a portable, patient-worn respiration-signalling device for monitoring the patient's breathing.

Additionally, there is a need for a respiration-signalling device which can efficiently detect airflow in the trachea to positively locate the trachea for guiding an intubation tube for anesthesia.

It is an object of this invention to set forth a respiration-signalling device which can meet the aforesaid needs.

The present invention provides a respiration-signalling device, comprising:

a housing; wherein

said housing confines therewithin a thermistor, and comprises means for conducting a patient's breathing across said thermistor;

said housing further confines therewithin (a) a battery, and (b) means coupling said thermistor to said battery for causing said battery to heat said thermistor to a stable temperature which is higher than the temperature of such patient's inhaled and exhaled breath; and

said thermistor comprises means responsive to a conduct of such patient's breathing thereacross to cause (a) a cooling of said thermistor, and (b) an increase in electrical resistance of said thermistor; and further including

means also confined within said housing, and coupled to said thermistor, responsive to an increase in electrical resistance of said thermistor for providing a sensory indication of such patient's breathing performance.

The present invention also provides a respiration-signalling device, comprising:

a housing; wherein

said housing comprises a face mask;

said face mask comprises (a) means for enclosing therewithin both the nasal and oral breathing passages of a patient, and (b) an electrical-circuitry enclosure;

said enclosure confines therewithin a pair of thermistors which are disposed to accommodate a conduct of a patient's breathing thereacross;

said enclosure further confines therewithin (a) a battery, and (b) means coupling said thermistors to said battery for heating of said thermistors to a stable temperature which is higher than the temperature of such patient's inhaled and exhaled breath;

one thermistor of said pair thereof comprises

means responsive to a conduct of such patient's exhaled breath thereacross to cause (a) a cooling of said one thermistor, and (b) an increase in electrical resistance of said one thermistor;

the other thermistor of said pair thereof comprises means responsive to a conduct of such patient's inhaled breath thereacross to cause (a) a cooling of said other thermistor, and (b) an increase in electrical resistance of said other thermistor; and further including

means also confined within said enclosure, and coupled to said thermistors, responsive to an increase in electrical resistance of said thermistors for providing a sensory indication of such patient's breathing performance.

The present invention also provides a respiration-signalling device comprising a housing; means coupled to said housing for admitting breath into said housing and discharging breath out of said housing; a sensory component coupled to said housing, and electrically-operative, for signalling respiration; electrically-operative means, coupled to said component, and responsive to respiration for operating said component; and a source of electrical potential coupled to said component-operating means for effecting operation thereof.

In one embodiment of the invention, said housing comprises a face mask; said mask has means for admitting breath therein and for discharging breath out thereof; said means comprises a thermistor; and said sensory component comprises a light-emitting diode.

Said sensory component may comprise an audible alarm.

Said electrically-operative means may comprise a thermistor, an amplifier coupled to said thermistor for enhancing an electrical output of said thermistor; said sensory component comprising a light-emitting diode; wherein said diode is coupled to said amplifier.

The device may further include means interposed between said diode and said amplifier for controlling an electrical input to said diode. The controlling means may comprise a signal comparator.

The device may further include timing means, interposed between said alarm and said component-operating means, for controlling operation of said alarm.

Said housing may comprise a hand grip and may further include an elongate probe; wherein said probe has means formed in an end thereof for conducting air flow therethrough; and said component-operating means is confined within said end of said probe. Said sensory component may comprise means for producing an audible frequency. Said sensory component may comprise means for producing visual, pulsed indications of respiration.

The present invention still further provides a respiration-signalling device comprising a face mask;

means for admitting breath into, and for discharging breath out of, said mask; first and second sensory components, coupled to said housing and electrically-operative, for signalling inspiration and expiration, respectively; first and second electrically-operative means, coupled to said first and second components, respectively, for operating said components; and a source of electrical potential coupled to both said first and second component-operating means for effecting operation thereof.

Said first and second temperature-sensitive means may comprise thermistors; and said first and second sensory components may comprise light-emitting diodes.

Further aspects of this invention, as well as the novel features thereof, will become more apparent by reference to the following description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying figures, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective illustration of a first embodiment of the invention which takes the form of a face mask;

Figure 2 is a depiction of the face mask of Figure 1 in place on a patient during transport of the patient from surgery, or the like, to a recovery room;

Figure 3 is a block diagram of the circuitry of the first embodiment of the invention;

Figure 4 is a perspective illustration of a second embodiment of the invention which takes the form of a trachea-locating handled probe;

Figure 4a is a fragmentary view, considerably enlarged, of the end of the probe to show the air passages formed therein;

Figure 5 is an illustration of the second embodiment of the invention set upon a battery charger when not in use;

Figure 6 is a block diagram of the circuitry of the second embodiment of the invention;

Figure 7 is a perspective depiction of an embodiment of the novel respiration-signalling device for use with standard anesthesia equipment; and

Figure 8 depicts the embodiment of Figure 7 in association with an intubation tube and anesthesia and oxygen tubes.

As shown in Figures 1 - 3, the first embodiment of the respiration-signalling device 10 comprises a face mask 12 having straps 14 for affixing thereof to the face of a patient 16. The mask 12 has a circuitry enclosure 18 for housing therewithin electrical components of the device. Enclosure 18 has a pair of lenses 20 behind which are light-emitting diodes 22 and 24 for evidencing normal breathing, as will be explained in the ensuing text. Too, the enclosure 18 has a louver 26 set over a buzzer 28 (therein) which will signal the cessation of breathing. At an end of the enclosure 18, supported on projecting lobes 30, are a pair of respiration openings 32, the latter having screens 34 fixed thereon.

The enclosure 18 contains a battery 16 which provides the electrical power for the device 10. An inspiration or inhale sensor 38, and an expiration or exhale sensor 40, each comprising a thermistor are coupled to the battery 36. The thermistor sensors 38 and 40 are heated to a stable level by current flowing through resistors 42 interposed between the sensors and the battery 36. Sensors 38 and 40 are independently coupled to voltage amplifiers 44 and 46. The latter, sequentially, are coupled to signal comparators 48 and 50. A threshold or reference level of potential is supplied to the comparators 48 and 50 by a common connection 52 via a potentiometer 54 which is coupled to the battery 36. Consequently, differential signals illuminate the diodes 22 and 24. Sensors 38 and 40 are heated, to achieve the aforesaid stable level, to a temperature above that of the patient's ingested and exhaled breath, and are disposed, within the mask 12, for the passage of the patient's breathing thereacross. Sensor 38 is cooled, then, by the inhaled air, and sensor 40 is cooled by the exhaled air or breath. As a result, all the while that the patient is being transported, and experiencing normal breathing, the diodes 22 and 24 illuminate in proper sequence. The potentiometer 54 accommodates for the adjustment of the device 10 for heavy or shallow breathing. Of course, if there is a cessation of breathing, the diodes will fail to illuminate, and the buzzer 28 will sound to alert medical personnel to institute remedial action.

The buzzer 28 is activated by a timer 56 which receives signal outputs from lines 58 and 60, respectively, joined to diodes 22 and 24. The timer 56 monitors the breathing cycle as well, and has a pre-set response time, for example: five seconds. Hence, if either output, from lines 58 and 60, is absent for over five seconds, the timer 56 will operate to power the buzzer 28 and/or a communications interface 62 for signalling an external alarm device such as may be located in a nurses station, for instance.

An alternate embodiment 64 of a respiration-signalling device, depicted in Figures 4, 4a, 5 and 6, serves as a tracheal locating device. It comprises a handle 66 in which are confined the operating circuitry components. A projecting end 68 latchingly receives a tubular probe 70. One probe 70 is shown latched to the handle 66, and another is shown in isolation for purposes of clarity of perception. The remote end 72 of the probe 70 has a void 74 formed therein and a plurality of air guides 76 which define narrowed, venturi-like trackways 78 for inducing acceleration of respiration therethrough. Confined within the end 72 is a thermistor-sensor 38'. Electrical lines confined within the probe 70 couple the sensor 38' to the components within the handle 66. The handle end 68 has a socket 80 which receives an earphone 82 which may be used by a medical attendant. Carried atop the end 68 are an on/off switch 84, a low battery lamp 86, a light-emitting diode lens 88, a "ready" lamp 90, and a pair of

speakers 92.

In use, the probe 70 is inserted through an intubation tube, and then into the mouth of the patient, and down into the trachea. It locates the trachea by sensing the gross airflow there and, consequently, provides for locating the intubation tube correctly thereat. Upon the probe 70 locating the trachea, the intubation tube is advanced thereto, and the probe 70 is then withdrawn (whereupon standard anesthesia equipment may be coupled to the intubation tube).

The handle-confined circuitry of Figure 6 comprises another battery 36' which supplies current to the probe-carried thermistor-sensor 38'. The sensor 38' is coupled to another amplifier 44'. In this embodiment 64, what is provided is a signal frequency representative of the breathing or air flow into and out of the trachea. The sensor 38' provides a signal which varies with the air flow to the amplifier 44', which avoids saturation from heavy airflow, and, in turn, the signal is conducted to a pair of voltage-controlled oscillators 94 and 96. Oscillator 94 is coupled to a speaker amplifier 98. The latter supplies a signal, which increases in frequency with increasing airflow - indicative of a closure of the probe 70 onto the location of the trachea - to the speakers 92 and/or the earphone 82. The oscillator 96 supplies a same signal, which also increases in frequency with increasing airflow, to a light-emitting diode 100 (within lens 88). Oscillator 94 is configured to deliver an audio frequency, whereas oscillator 96 is configured to provide signal pulses within a range of zero to 25 pulses per second for visual perception. A further monitoring element, meter 102 having a reciprocating component 104 therewithin, is also coupled to the output of amplifier 44'. The component 104 is translatable within the meter 102 to track, and represent, the airflow in the trachea of the patient 16.

Embodiment 64 can be set into a battery recharger 106, as shown in Figure 5, when not in use. The handle 66 has contactors (not shown) for engagement with receptors within the recharger 106, and the latter has a line cord 108, for attachment thereof to a source of voltage.

A further, alternative embodiment 110 of the invention is configured for incorporation with standard anesthesia equipment to constantly monitor a patient's respiration. The same is shown in Figure 7, and in Figure 8 in association with an intubation tube and anesthesia and oxygen tubes. Embodiment 110 comprises a housing 112 which confines the relevant circuitry to operate inhale and exhale light-emitting diodes 114 and 116, a battery 118 as a power source, as well as a low battery indicator 120. A collar 122 at one end receives an end of an intubation tube 124, and another collar 126 at the opposite end receives the Y-connector 128 of anesthesia and oxygen tubes. The housing 112 has a socket connection 130 which may be used for the attachment of an optional visual

display unit 132. The operation of this embodiment 110 is identical to that of the embodiment 10 of Figures 1 - 3; only the housing 112 differs from the enclosure 18 of the first embodiment.

While the invention has been described in connection with specific embodiments thereof it is to be clearly understood that this is done only by way of example and not as a limitation to the scope of the invention as set forth in the objects thereof and in the appended claims.

Claims

1. A respiration-signalling device, comprising:
 - a housing; wherein
 - said housing confines therewithin a thermistor, and comprises means for conducting a patient's breathing across said thermistor;
 - said housing further confines therewithin (a) a battery, and (b) means coupling said thermistor to said battery for causing said battery to heat said thermistor to a stable temperature which is higher than the temperature of such patient's inhaled and exhaled breath; and
 - said thermistor comprises means responsive to a conduct of such patient's breathing thereacross to cause (a) a cooling of said thermistor, and (b) an increase in electrical resistance of said thermistor; and further including
 - means also confined within said housing, and coupled to said thermistor, responsive to an increase in electrical resistance of said thermistor for providing a sensory indication of such patient's breathing performance.
2. A respiration-signalling device, comprising:
 - a housing; wherein
 - said housing comprises a face mask;
 - said face mask comprises (a) means for enclosing therewithin both the nasal and oral breathing passages of a patient, and (b) an electrical-circuitry enclosure;
 - said enclosure confines therewithin a pair of thermistors which are disposed to accommodate a conduct of a patient's breathing thereacross;
 - said enclosure further confines therewithin (a) a battery, and (b) means coupling said thermistors to said battery for heating of said thermistors to a stable temperature which is higher than the temperature of such patient's inhaled and exhaled breath;
 - one thermistor of said pair thereof comprises means responsive to a conduct of such patient's exhaled breath thereacross to cause (a) a cooling of said one thermistor, and (b) an increase in electrical resistance of said one ther-

mistor;

the other thermistor of said pair thereof comprises means responsive to a conduct of such patient's inhaled breath thereacross to cause (a) a cooling of said other thermistor, and (b) an increase in electrical resistance of said other thermistor; and further including

means also confined within said enclosure, and coupled to said thermistors, responsive to an increase in electrical resistance of said thermistors for providing a sensory indication of such patient's breathing performance.

3. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein:
said sensory-indication means comprises a pair of light-emitting diodes.

4. A respiration-signalling device, according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein:
said sensory-indication means comprises means for producing an audible signal.

5. A respiration-signalling device, according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein:
said sensory-indication means comprises, further, means coupled to said thermistors for enhancing an electrical output of said thermistors.

6. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 3, further including:
voltage amplifiers interposed between said diodes and said thermistors.

7. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 6, further including:
signal comparators interposed between said voltage amplifiers and said diodes.

8. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 4, wherein:
said audible-signal producing means comprises a buzzer.

9. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 8, further including:
timing means, interposed between said buzzer and said thermistors, for controlling operation of said buzzer.

10. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 1, wherein:
said housing comprises (a) a handle, and (b) an elongate probe;
said thermistor is confined in an end of said probe; and
said breathing-conducting means com-

prises a void formed in said end of said probe.

11. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 1, further including:

a voltage-controlled oscillator interposed between said thermistor and said sensory-indication means.

12. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 11, wherein:

said sensory-indication means comprises a light-emitting diode; and further including a voltage amplifier interposed between said oscillator and said thermistor.

13. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 11, wherein:

said sensory-indication means comprises a speaker-amplifier.

14. A respiration-signalling device, according to claim 13, further including

a voltage amplifier interposed between said oscillator and said thermistor.

15. A respiration-signalling device, comprising:
a housing;

a sensory component coupled to said housing, and electrically-operative, for signalling respiration;

electrically-operative means, coupled to said component, and responsive to respiration for operating said component; and

a source of electrical potential coupled to said component-operating means for effecting operation thereof; wherein

said component-operating means is temperature-sensitive.

16. A respiration-signalling device, comprising:

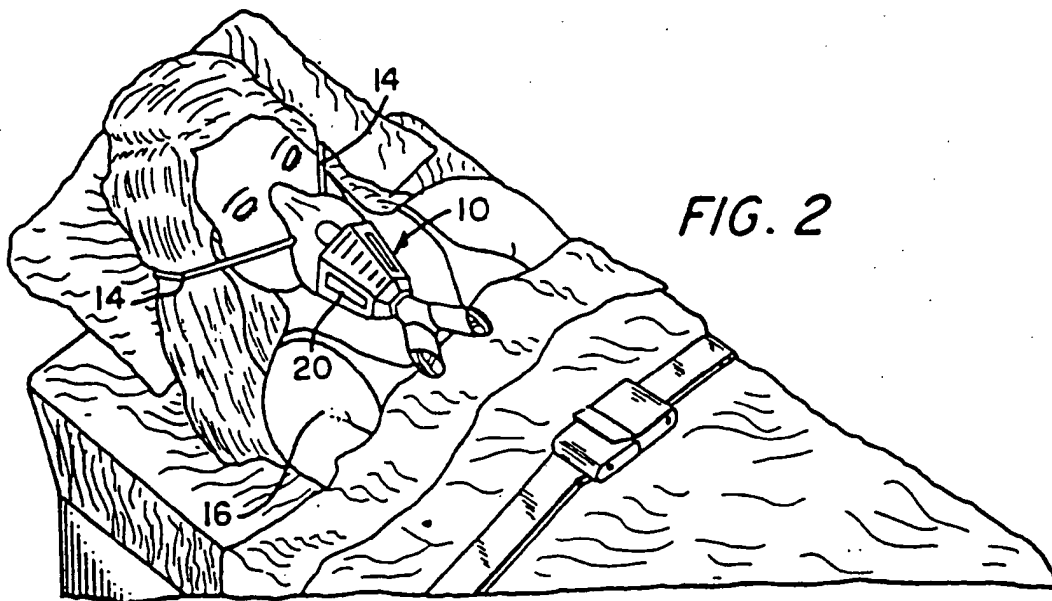
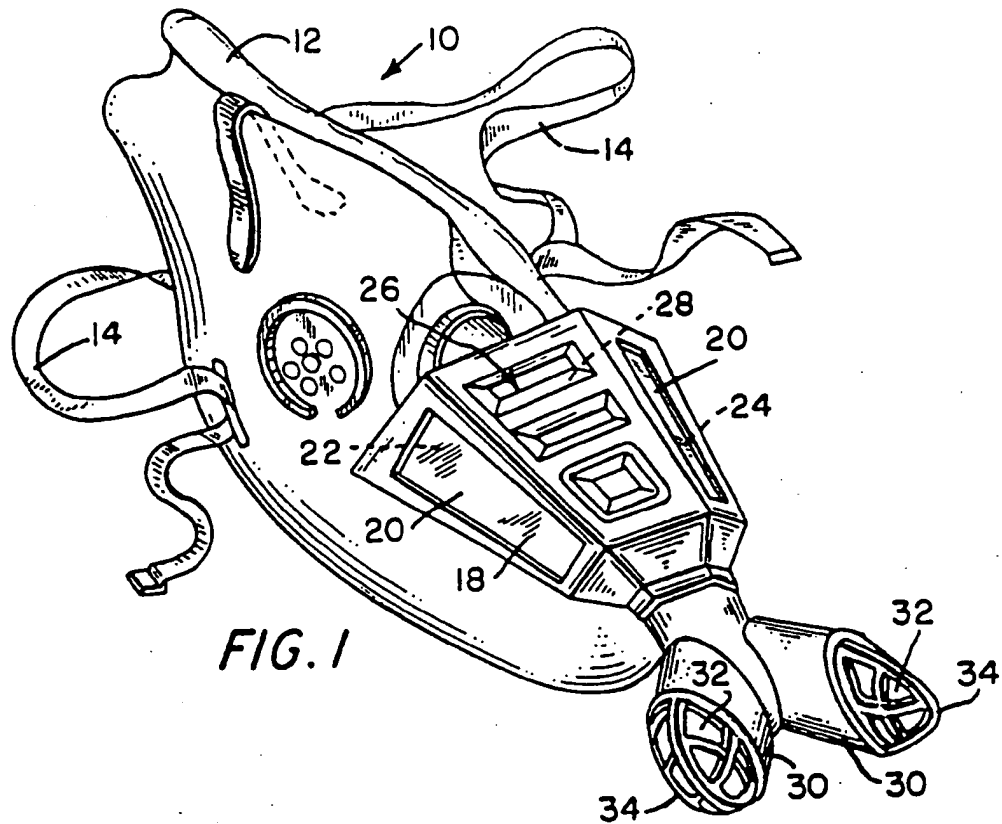
a face mask;

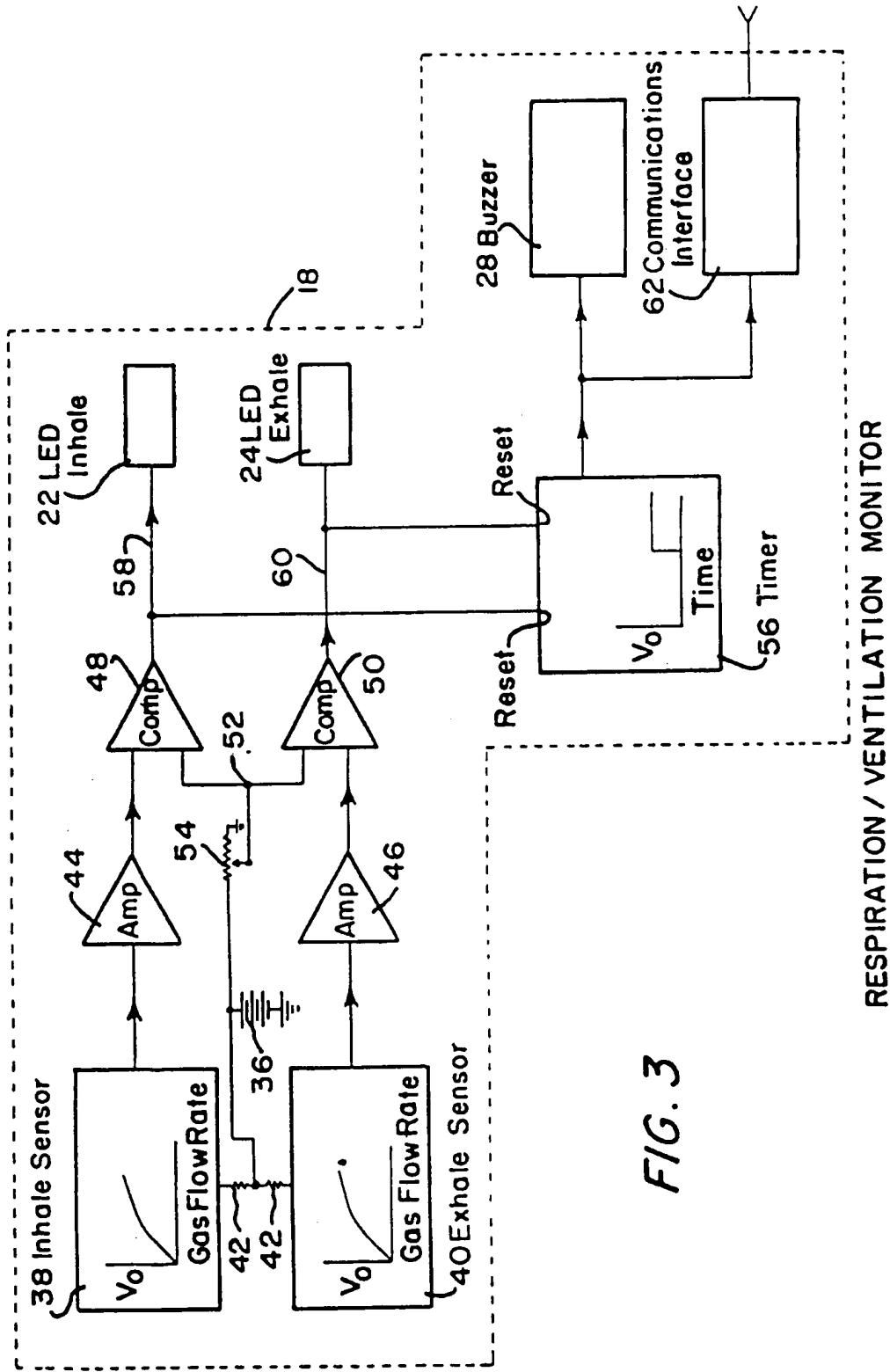
means for admitting breath into, and for discharging breath out of, said mask;

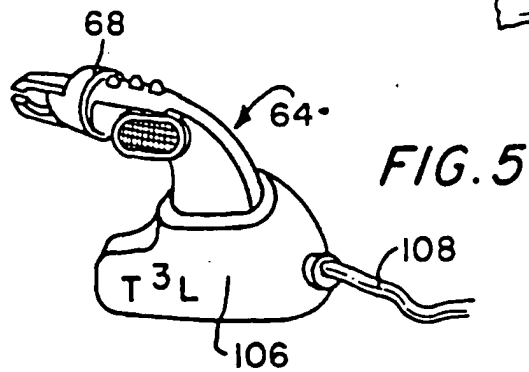
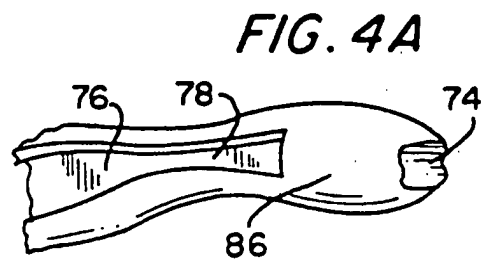
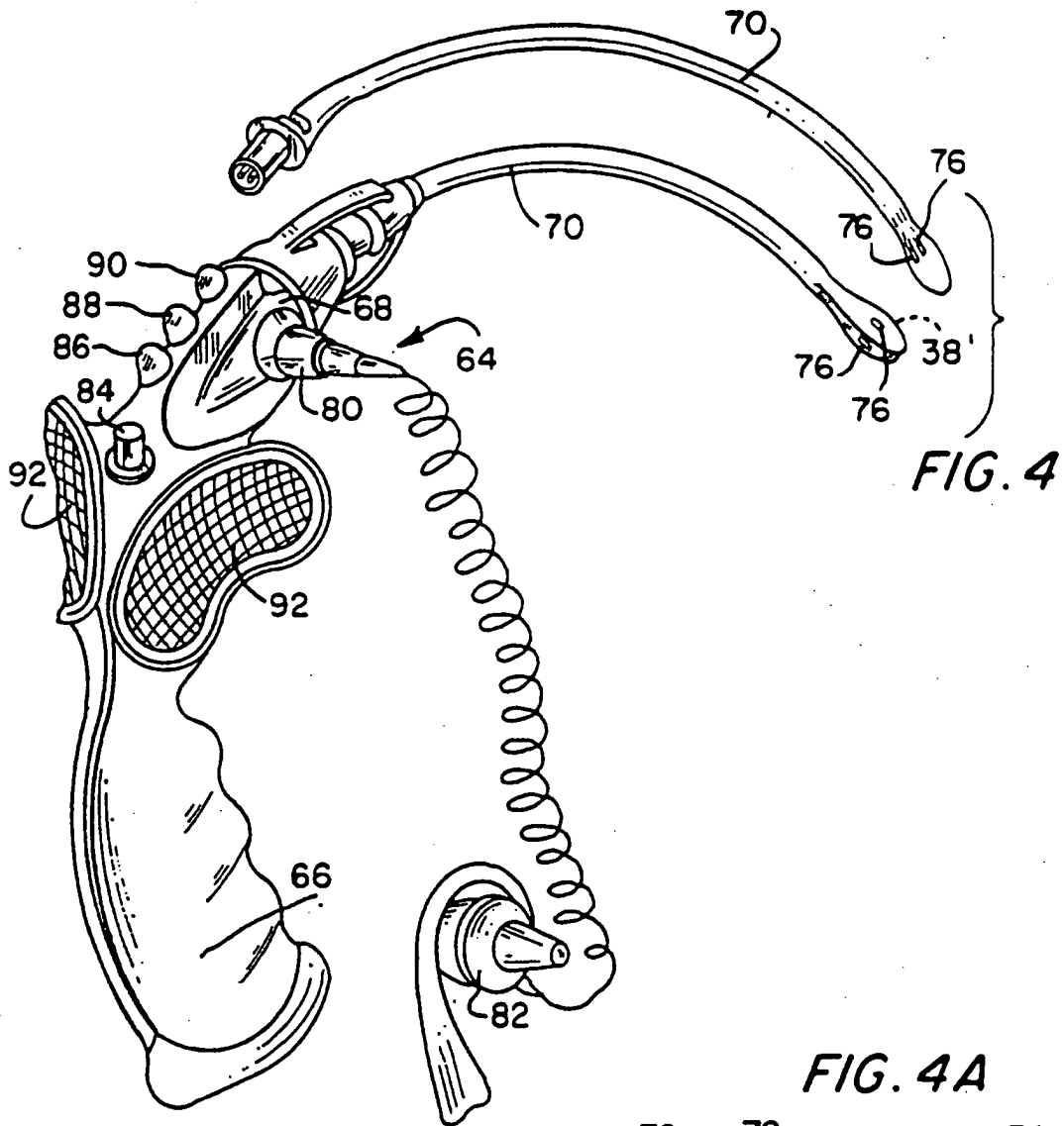
first and second sensory components, coupled to said mask and electrically-operative, for signalling inspiration and expiration, respectively;

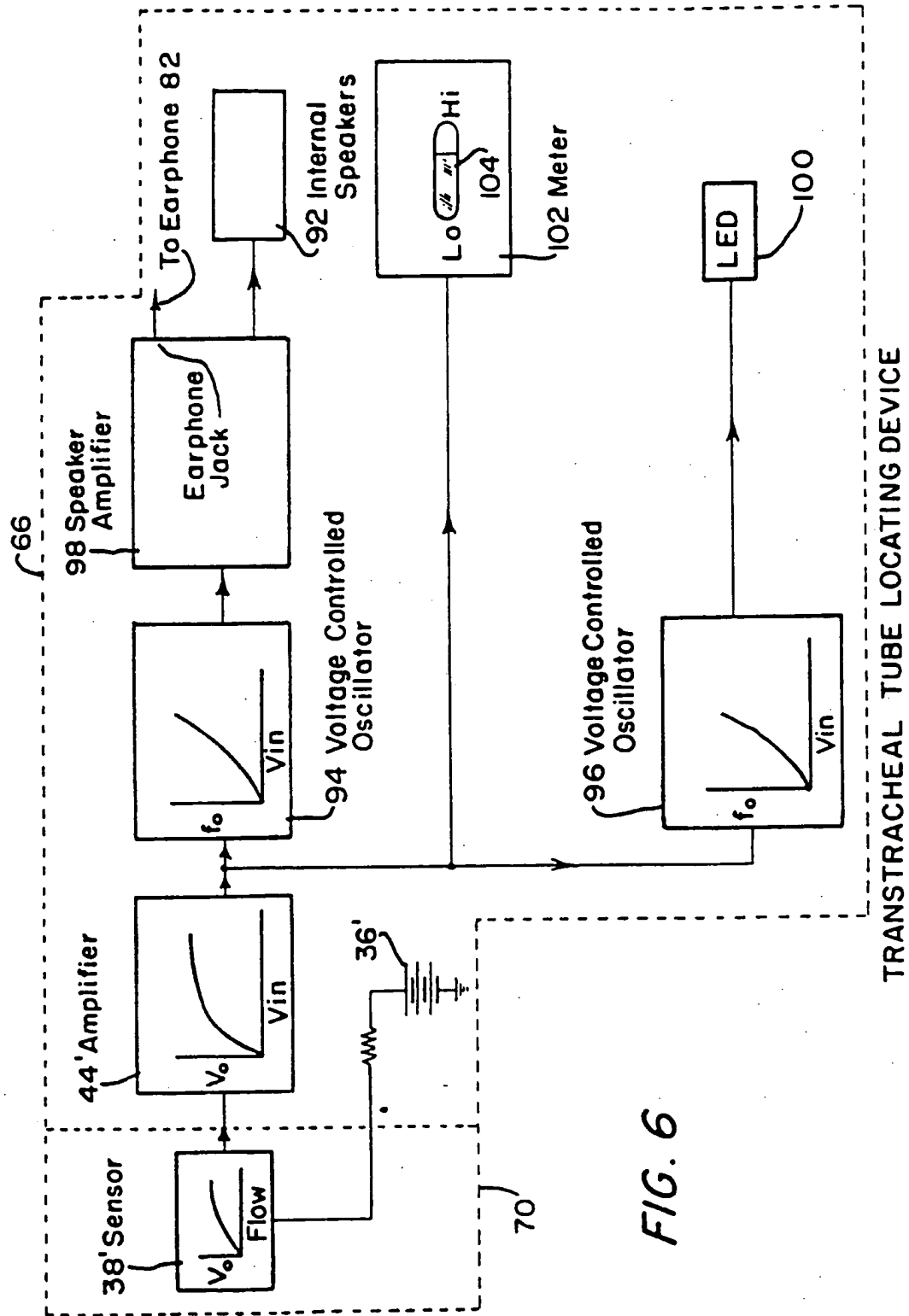
first and second, temperature-sensitive means, coupled to said first and second components, respectively, and responsive to inspiration and expiration, respectively, for operating said first and second components; and

a source of electrical potential coupled to both of said first and second component-operating means for effecting operation thereof.









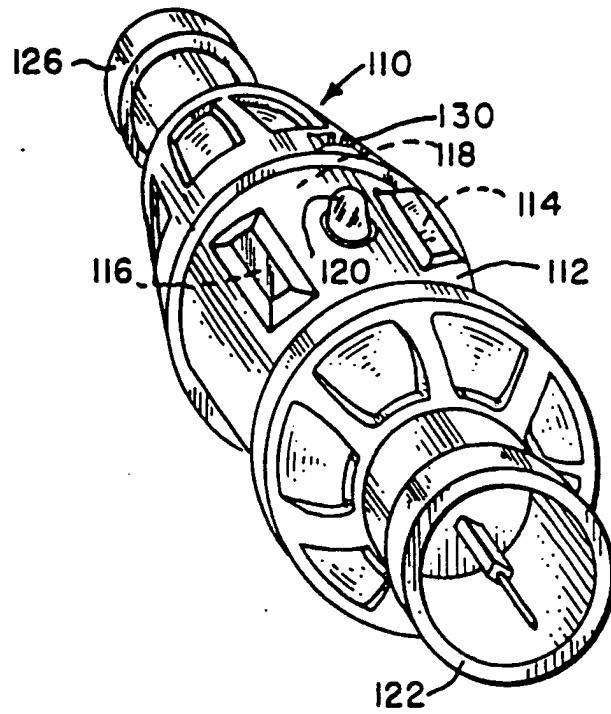


FIG. 7

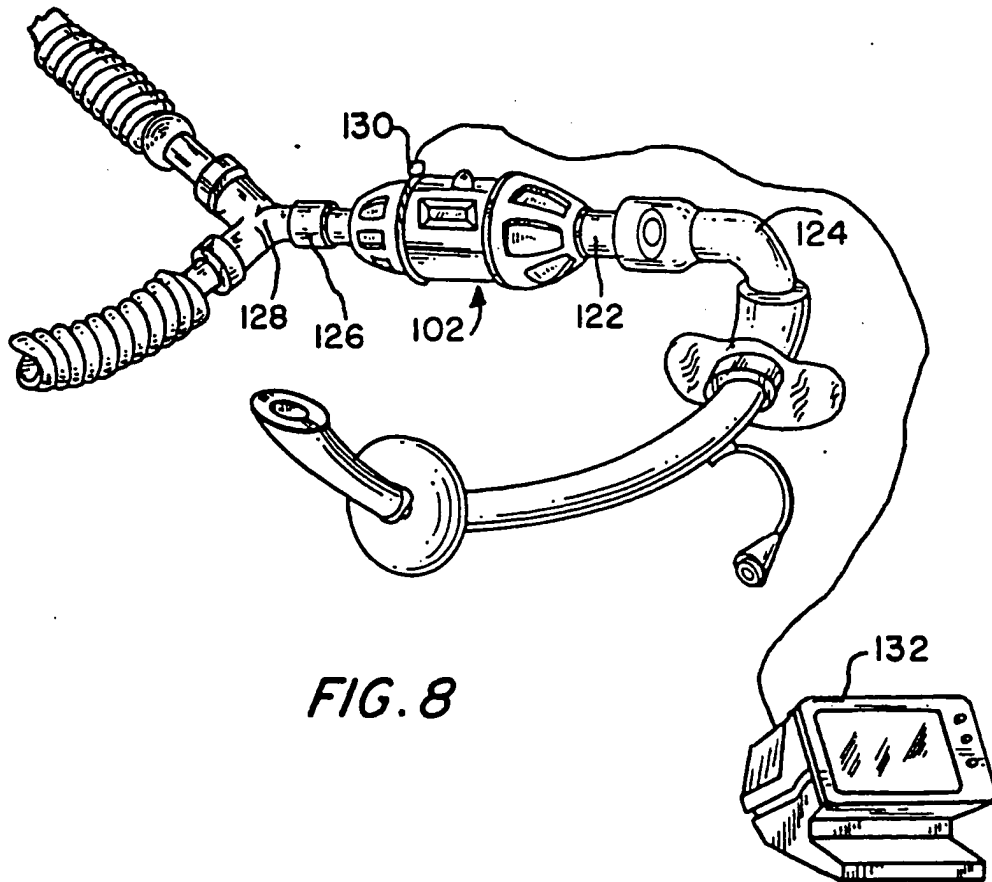


FIG. 8



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 91 31 0118

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5)
X	EP-A-0 135 134 (VITACOMM LTD.) * the whole document *	1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14	A61B5/08 A61B5/097
X	US-A-4 651 746 (W.H. WALL)	1, 3, 4, 14	
Y	* the whole document *	2, 5, 10, 15	
Y	US-A-4 830 022 (B.L. HARSHE ET AL.)	2, 5, 15	
A	* the whole document *	7, 12-14	
Y	WD-A-9 002 521 (TEMP-STIK CORPORATION)	10	
	* the whole document *		
A	US-A-3 962 917 (H. TERADA)	1, 2, 15, 16	
	* the whole document *		
A	EP-A-0 325 075 (SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY) * abstract; figures 1, 3 *	2	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5)
			A61B A62B A61M
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 07 FEBRUARY 1992	Examiner HUNT B. W.
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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